DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 384 007 CS 012 171

AUTHOR	Ruopp, Kristin L.; And Others
TITLE	Taking Books Home: A Check-Out System for the Primary Grades. Instructional Resource No. 9.
INSTITUTION	National Reading Research Center, Athens, GA.; National Reading Research Center, College Park, MD.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	95
CONTRACT	117A20007
NOTE	24p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Classroom Techniques; Cultural Pluralism; Enrichment Activities; Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Primary Education; Program Descriptions; *Reading Material Selection
IDENTIFIERS	*Emergent Literacy

ABSTRACT

A "Books Home" program can be a powerful tool in helping beginning readers develop fluency and confidence in themselves as readers. Four first- and second-grade teachers describe how they set up a "Books Home" program in their classrooms as an important component of literacy instruction for emergent readers. This instructional resource describes how a "Books Home" program can help teachers establish consistent communication with families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It provides some basic suggestions on how to set up a "Books Home" program including selecting books, working with children to develop a check-out system which they can manage independently, and integrating a "Books Home" program with other classroom literacy activities. Contains 17 references. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 384 007

Taking Books Home:
A Check-Out System for the Primary Grades

Kristin L. Ruopp Shelley D. Wong
Julia E. Friedman Twila Frey Larry Pennington Christine Sutton

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

NRRC
National Reading Research Center

Instructional Resource No. 9
Spring 1995

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS012171

NRRC

National Reading Research Center

Taking Books Home:
A Check-Out System for the Primary Grades

Kristin L. Ruopp
Shelley D. Wong
University of Maryland College Park

Julia E. Friedman
Twila Frey
Larry Pennington
Christine Sutton
Arlington, Virginia Public Schools

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE NO. 9
Spring 1995

The work reported herein is a National Reading Research Project of the University of Georgia and University of Maryland. It was supported under the Educational Research and Development Centers Program (PR/AWARD NO. 117A20007) as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the National Reading Research Center, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, or the U.S. Department of Education.

NRRC National Reading Research Center

Executive Committee
Donna E. Alvermann, Co-Director
University of Georgia
John T. Guthrie, Co-Director
University of Maryland College Park
James F. Baumann, Associate Director
University of Georgia
Patricia S. Koskinen, Associate Director
University of Maryland College Park
Nancy B. Mizelle, Acting Associate Director
University of Georgia
Jamie Lynn Metsala, Interim Associate Director
University of Maryland College Park
Penny Oldfather
University of Georgia
John F. O'Flahavan
University of Maryland College Park
James V. Hoffman
University of Texas at Austin
Cynthia R. Hynd
University of Georgia
Robert Serpell
University of Maryland Baltimore County
Betty Shockley
Clarke County School District, Athens, Georgia
Linda DeGroff
University of Georgia

Publications Editors

Research Reports and Perspectives
Linda DeGroff, Editor
University of Georgia
James V. Hoffman, Associate Editor
University of Texas at Austin
Mariam Jean Dreher, Associate Editor
University of Maryland College Park
Instructional Resources
Lee Galda, *University of Georgia*
Research Highlights
William G. Holliday
University of Maryland College Park
Policy Briefs
James V. Hoffman
University of Texas at Austin
Videos
Shawn M. Glynn, *University of Georgia*

NRRC Staff
Barbara F. Howard, Office Manager
Kathy B. Davis, Senior Secretary
University of Georgia

Barbara A. Neitzey, Administrative Assistant
Valerie Tyra, Accountant
University of Maryland College Park

National Advisory Board
Phyllis W. Aldrich
Saratoga Warren Board of Cooperative Educational Services, Saratoga Springs, New York
Arthur N. Applebee
State University of New York, Albany
Ronald S. Brandt
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Marshá T. DeLain
Delaware Department of Public Instruction
Carl A. Grant
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Walter Kintsch
University of Colorado at Boulder
Robert L. Linn
University of Colorado at Boulder
Luis C. Moll
University of Arizona
Carol M. Santa
School District No. 5
Kalispell, Montana
Anne P. Sweet
Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education
Louise Cherry Wilkinson
Rutgers University

Production Editor
Katherine P. Hutchison
University of Georgia

Dissemination Coordinator
Jordana E. Rich
University of Georgia

Text Formatter
Ann Marie Vanstone
University of Georgia

NRRC - University of Georgia
318 Aderhold
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602-7125
(706) 542-3674 Fax: (706) 542-3678
INTERNET: NRRC@uga.cc.uga.edu

NRRC - University of Maryland College Park
2102 J. M. Patterson Building
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20742
(301) 405-8035 Fax: (301) 314-9625
INTERNET: NRRC@umail.umd.edu

About the National Reading Research Center

The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on reading and reading instruction. The NRRC is operated by a consortium of the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland College Park in collaboration with researchers at several institutions nationwide.

The NRRC's mission is to discover and document those conditions in homes, schools, and communities that encourage children to become skilled, enthusiastic, lifelong readers. NRRC researchers are committed to advancing the development of instructional programs sensitive to the cognitive, sociocultural, and motivational factors that affect children's success in reading. NRRC researchers from a variety of disciplines conduct studies with teachers and students from widely diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 classrooms. Research projects deal with the influence of family and family-school interactions on the development of literacy; the interaction of sociocultural factors and motivation to read; the impact of literature-based reading programs on reading achievement; the effects of reading strategies instruction on comprehension and critical thinking in literature, science, and history; the influence of innovative group participation structures on motivation and learning; the potential of computer technology to enhance literacy; and the development of methods and standards for alternative literacy assessments.

The NRRC is further committed to the participation of teachers as full partners in its research. A better understanding of how teachers view the development of literacy, how they use knowledge from research, and how they approach change in the classroom is crucial to improving instruction. To further this understanding, the NRRC conducts school-based research in which teachers explore their own philosophical and pedagogical orientations and trace their professional growth.

Dissemination is an important feature of NRRC activities. Information on NRRC research appears in several formats. *Research Reports* communicate the results of original research or synthesize the findings of several lines of inquiry. They are written primarily for researchers studying various areas of reading and reading instruction. The *Perspective Series* presents a wide range of publications, from calls for research and commentary on research and practice to first-person accounts of experiences in schools. *Instructional Resources* include curriculum materials, instructional guides, and materials for professional growth, designed primarily for teachers.

For more information about the NRRC's research projects and other activities, or to have your name added to the mailing list, please contact:

Donna E. Alvermann, Co-Director
National Reading Research Center
318 Aderhold Hall
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602-7125
(706) 542-3674

John T. Guthrie, Co-Director
National Reading Research Center
2102 J. M. Patterson Building
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
(301) 405-8035

NRRC Editorial Review Board

Patricia Adkins
University of Georgia

Peter Afflerbach
University of Maryland College Park

JoBeth Allen
University of Georgia

Patty Anders
University of Arizona

Tom Anderson
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Harriette Arrington
University of Kentucky

Irene Blum
Pine Springs Elementary School
Falls Church, Virginia

John Borkowski
Notre Dame University

Cynthia Bowen
Baltimore County Public Schools
Towson, Maryland

Martha Carr
University of Georgia

Suzanne Clewell
Montgomery County Public Schools
Rockville, Maryland

Joan Coley
Western Maryland College

Michelle Commeyras
University of Georgia

Linda Cooper
Shaker Heights City Schools
Shaker Heights, Ohio

Karen Costello
Connecticut Department of Education
Hartford, Connecticut

Karin Dahl
Ohio State University

Lynne Diaz-Rico
California State University-San Bernardino

Pamela Dunston
Clemson University

Jim Flood
San Diego State University

Dana Fox
University of Arizona

Linda Gambrell
University of Maryland College Park

Valerie Garfield
Chattahoochee Elementary School
Cumming, Georgia

Sherrie Gibney-Sherman
Athens-Clarke County Schools
Athens, Georgia

Rachel Grant
University of Maryland College Park

Barbara Guzzetti
Arizona State University

Jane Haugh
Center for Developing Learning Potentials
Silver Spring, Maryland

Beth Ann Herrmann
Northern Arizona University

Kathleen Heubach
University of Georgia

Susan Hill
University of Maryland College Park

Sally Hudson-Ross
University of Georgia

Cynthia Hynd
University of Georgia

Robert Jimenez
University of Oregon

Karen Johnson
Pennsylvania State University

James King
University of South Florida

Sandra Kimbrell
West Hall Middle School
Oakwood, Georgia

Kate Kirby
Gwinnett County Public Schools
Lawrenceville, Georgia

Sophie Kowzun
Prince George's County Schools
Landover, Maryland

Linda Labbo
University of Georgia

Rosary Lalik
Virginia Polytechnic Institute

Michael Law
University of Georgia

Sarah McCarthey
University of Texas at Austin

Veda McClain
University of Georgia

Lisa McFalls
University of Georgia

Mike McKenna
Georgia Southern University

Donna Mealey
Louisiana State University

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Barbara Michalove
Fowler Drive Elementary School
Athens, Georgia

Akintunde Morakinyo
University of Maryland College Park

Lesley Morrow
Rutgers University

Bruce Murray
University of Georgia

Susan Neuman
Temple University

Caroline Noyes
University of Georgia

John O'Flahavan
University of Maryland College Park

Penny Oldfather
University of Georgia

Joan Pagnucco
University of Georgia

Barbara Palmer
Mount Saint Mary's College

Mike Pickle
Georgia Southern University

Jessie Pollack
Maryland Department of Education
Baltimore, Maryland

Sally Porter
Blair High School
Silver Spring, Maryland

Michael Pressley
State University of New York at Albany

Tom Reeves
University of Georgia

Lenore Ringler
New York University

Mary Roe
University of Delaware

Nadeen T. Ruiz
California State University-Sacramento

Rebecca Sammons
University of Maryland College Park

Paula Schwanenflugel
University of Georgia

Robert Serpell
University of Maryland Baltimore County

Betty Shockley
Fowler Drive Elementary School
Athens, Georgia

Susan Sonnenschein
University of Maryland Baltimore County

Steve Stahl
University of Georgia

Anne Sweet
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Liqing Tao
University of Georgia

Ruby Thompson
Clark Atlanta University

Louise Tomlinson
University of Georgia

Sandy Tumarkin
Strawberry Knolls Elementary School
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Sheila Valencia
University of Washington

Bruce VanSledright
University of Maryland College Park

Chris Walton
Northern Territory University
Australia

Janet Watkins
University of Georgia

Louise Waynant
Prince George's County Schools
Upper Marlboro, Maryland

Priscilla Waynant
Rolling Terrace Elementary School
Takoma Park, Maryland

Dera Weaver
Athens Academy
Athens, Georgia

Jane West
Agnes Scott

Steve White
University of Georgia

Allen Wigfield
University of Maryland College Park

Shelley Wong
University of Maryland College Park

About the Authors

Kristin L. Ruopp teaches first through third grade students in the ESOL/Bilingual Services program of the Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools. She has also taught adult nonreaders as well as secondary and university students of English as a Second Language. She is a graduate of the M.Ed. program in Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Shelley D. Wong is Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Maryland College Park. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Her interests include sociocultural approaches to literacy, ethnic studies and multicultural education, and dialogic ways of teaching and research.

Julia E. Friedman began teaching in 1985 as an aide to a reading teacher at the American Cooperative School in La Paz, Bolivia. She has been teaching first grade students in Arlington County schools since 1988. During her first three years in Arlington, she taught students in a full day ESOL/HILT (English for Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training) program.

Twila Frey has taught Head Start, Kindergarten and second grade students and has been teaching second grade since 1992. She is interested in making reading experiences enjoyable for emergent readers so that reading becomes an integral part of daily living for her students.

Larry Pennington has been teaching children for 18 years. He began teaching as a graduate student and educational aide in Special Education, eventually earning a Master's degree. Prior to becoming a first grade classroom teacher in Arlington County, he taught students in Special Education programs for 14 years. He has completed work towards a doctoral degree in Administration and Supervision of Special Education.

Christine Sutton began teaching in 1978 and has spent much of her career working with second language learners. She has served as Project Specialist for Arlington's Family-School Partnership Project (a program designed to promote home-school cooperation to enhance children's education), and is now an elementary assistant principal in Arlington.

Taking Books Home: A Check-Out System for the Primary Grades

Kristin L. Ruopp
Shelley D. Wong
University of Maryland College Park

Julia E. Friedman
Twila Frey
Larry Pennington
Christine Sutton
Arlington, Virginia Public Schools

National Reading Research Center
Universities of Georgia and Maryland
Instructional Resource No. 9
Spring 1995

Abstract. *A* Books Home *program can be a powerful tool in helping beginning readers develop fluency and confidence in themselves as readers. Four first- and second-grade teachers describe how they set up a* Books Home *program in their classrooms as an important component of literacy instruction for emergent readers. This instructional resource describes how a* Books Home *program can help teachers establish consistent communication with families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It provides some basic suggestions on how to set up a* Books Home *program including selecting books, working with children to develop a check-out system which they can manage independently, and integrating a* Books Home *program with other classroom literacy activities.*

Research has shown that children do well in school when the important adults in their lives provide consistent support for their learning (Epstein, 1986; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Taylor, 1983). What children learn at home is critical to their social and cognitive development in academic settings (Trueba & Delgado-Gaitan, 1988).

Most educators acknowledge that family involvement is beneficial to success in school. However, it is too often assumed that children who come from language minority homes are at risk for school failure because they come from homes where parents do not care about their children's education (Flores, 1991). Unfortunately, many models of compensatory education have assumed that bilingual children are disadvantaged simply because they do not speak the language of the school at home (Luke, 1986). In reality, a great many parents who are not native speakers of English are genuinely concerned about their children's schooling. However, without the cultural knowledge about the U.S. public school system that many of us take for granted, these parents may be unsure of how to help their children succeed (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

Given that most language minority parents are motivated to support their children's achievement in school, it is important for the school to make a special effort to establish communication with the home (Violand-Sanchez, Sutton, & Ware, 1991). Teachers and others involved in the school lives of children need to acknowledge that parents play an active role in supporting their child's learning.

Theoretical Basis for Books Home

Social interaction within the family facilitates not only a child's language development, but his or her cognitive skills as well (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). Collier (1994) notes that when placed in an academic environment without first language support, English as a second language learners find school difficult, do poorly on standardized tests, and show a lag in cognitive development. Social, linguistic, and cognitive skills are highly interrelated, each dependent upon the other for development and growth.

Given the close relationship of the development of these skills, how can the mainstream teacher find ways to access the knowledge which the language minority student possesses in order to aid the student in the second language learning environment? Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) propose that teachers should invest themselves in the study of household "*funds of knowledge*: historically accumulated, culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning" (p. 133). These bodies of knowledge can encompass such areas as tractor repair, well digging, folk medicine, Bible studies and horse-riding skills. A child's own home environment and culture forms a thick web of relationships with people with different knowledge and skill areas, which may not be directly approached by the school's curriculum. By learning about the child's home-based contexts of learning, the teacher can come to know the child as a "whole person" rather than merely as a "student" within an isolated classroom. Classrooms can be transformed into more advanced contexts for teaching and learning by developing ways to incorporate these funds of knowledge into classroom discussion and children's reading and writing.

One of the most important means of increasing parent involvement is to employ bilingual people (either school staff or volunteers) to communicate with non-English speaking parents (Arce-Hoyt & Johnson, 1992). Where bilingual schooling is not available to help reconcile the effect of language ability on classroom performance, teachers and parents need to work in unison to achieve a balance between what children are able to do in their first language and what they can do in their new language. Teachers and families must connect to achieve a continuity between the children's ever-widening abilities in the home context and their ability to learn and succeed in classrooms.

The achievement of such a balance is often hindered by lack of communication between school and home about literacy expectations and practices. According to Holland (1991), although the language and literacy of home accompanies the child to school, the home environment usually assumes a role that is peripheral to school literacy instruction. Holland further identifies two barriers for parents becoming actively involved in literacy development in the home:

- parents do not feel they are competent to teach literacy skills effectively; and,
- they perceive household business as limiting their ability to participate in literacy activities.

Compounding the problem is what DeJesus (1985) calls the "two headed giant." Teachers expect certain behaviors from students, and parents expect certain behaviors from students. "One head represents the school, and the other, the parents. The child looks to both as the authority." The problem, says DeJesus, is that the heads talk, but not necessarily to each other (p. 846). Similarly, Holland (1991) found that teachers and parents operated within implicitly defined boundaries regarding literacy practices. These boundaries can be intensified significantly by cultural and linguistic obstacles.

Context for the Current Study

With a view toward initiating a home-school literacy link in classrooms, we recently conducted an exploratory study within three first-grade and one second-grade classrooms with high enrollments of language minority students. The teachers involved in this project were involved in a larger reading research project to develop a comprehensive program of literacy instruction for first- and second-grade emergent readers (O'Flahavan & Wong, 1994).

It is often difficult for teachers to predict the diversity of literacy environments their language minority students experience at home. Some children in our study classrooms were already literate in a language other than English and received support from their monolingual parents in continuing their reading development in their first language at home. Some of these parents, however, felt unable to help children with their reading in English. Other parents were highly literate in English and assisted their children in reading school materials. Still other children were from families in which parents spoke both English and Spanish, for example, but had limited literacy abilities in both languages.

In order to meet the diverse needs of these students, the *Books Home* project needed to be flexible enough to encourage parental involvement in literacy development, given the differing abilities of parents. The emphasis of the *Books Home* program, as expressed to students, was to encourage them to read at home with a member of their household. Children were encouraged to spend time reading, looking at, and discussing their books with their parent, older sibling or other household member as an important and enjoyable activity. At times, we emphasized that parents who could not read English could have their child read to them, or could help the child try to predict the story by looking at and describing illustrations.

A *Books Home* program can serve as a first step in establishing regular home-school communication about reading and literacy practices. Reading at home with members of their household, children may begin to experience a greater sense of continuity between the contexts of home and school. The second step is to encourage parents to give feedback on their children's progress with the books they are bringing home. A third step is to invite parents to talk about other literacy experiences in the home. Moll & Greenberg (1990) believe that:

> An indispensable element of our approach is the creation of meaningful connections between academic and social life through the concrete learning activities of the students. We are convinced that teachers can

> establish, in systemic ways, the necessary social relations outside classrooms that will change and improve what occurs within the classroom walls. (p.345)

Through *Books Home*, we hoped to explore ways of establishing dialogue between children, parents, and teachers to increase the reciprocal flow of information about learning and literacy, in both school and home contexts.

An Overview of the Program

Our project began with about 200 (Wright StoryBox, Sunshine and Rigby 2000) books, about 65 titles per class. With an average class size of 23, there were at least 2 titles per child in each classroom library at any given time. Teachers were free to rotate books between classrooms, ensuring that new titles and appropriate levels of difficulty were available for children to take home. (This report covers the first four months of the Books Home Project.)

Books were numbered and referenced on computer by title, level of text difficulty, and classroom location. In each classroom, children recorded book numbers in chronological order as they "checked them out." This made it possible to track such data as whether a particular child was selecting books at the same or at progressively higher levels of difficulty, as well as the popularity of specific titles. Each classroom teacher developed a *Books Home* system based on a "check-out chart" which consisted of laminated library-book pockets (one for each child) attached to a piece of chart paper or a bulletin board. These pockets contained two record cards: one which recorded the book number and the date the book was taken home (to be left in the child's pocket), and another with the same information and a space for a signature (to be taken home with the book).

Books Home books were kept in a special place designated by the teacher, separate from library books and other books used in the classroom. Children carried books home in heavy-duty freezer bags marked with their names and large stickers showing a drawing of an open and smiling book.

Although the basic purpose and mechanics in each *Books Home* classroom were the same, each teacher viewed the role of the *Books Home* "component" in his/her classroom differently. While rereading, reading for fluency, strengthening home/school connections and the development of a personal sense of readership were goals in all four classrooms, each teacher varied his/her program. One class took home books they had read in classroom reading group instruction, two teachers assigned levels to books and limited each child's selection according to a general range of reading ability, and one teacher allowed children to choose freely from the books in the collection and generally did not use *Books Home* books for classroom instruction.

Classroom I: Second Grade

Twila Frey's class was composed of 18 children. Two-thirds of her students spoke a language other than English at home. The diversity of linguistic levels in this classroom made it important to look for ways to integrate *Books Home* as meaningfully as possible into the classroom environment.

One way that she addressed the need for integrating meaning from the *Books Home* program with other parts of her curriculum was to invite the children to keep a log of the books they took home on a 8 1/2" X 11" sheet. Each time a book went home she asked the children to write the title, and respond to the book by drawing a small picture and writing something about the book:

> I encourage divergent thinking, rather than copying or retelling the story. For example: What was a favorite part, and why? What did they learn that they didn't know about before? I encourage them to comment: "This makes me curious about a topic" or "This book reminds me of . . . ." When I read these comments, it gives me a jump-off point for something I want to comment on with a larger group.

Through reading the children's comments about the books they took home, Twila had a basis to assess their interests and incorporate their questions into her curriculum:

> In one guided reading session, we read *A Beaver Tale*, which a boy took home to read independently. He wrote, "I want to learn more about beavers." So I got a book from the library on beavers. The library book was way above the reading level of the boy who asked the question, so I read the book to the entire class. Later, I found a Big Book on beavers which I used as a shared reading. A shared reading is interactive and informative. The instructional points for the shared reading emerge from the children's observations and from mini-lessons that flow from the text.

By analyzing the children's response logs, Twila was able to see which children copied, which ones took risks to write something in their own words that they did not know how to spell, and which ones extended their knowledge of the patterns of the books to make their own sentences.

Twila Frey learned that for emergent readers, it was important that the book sent home be a familiar book, which had been worked on in class:

> If the book's too hard, it won't get read. Particularly with an ESOL population, if the parent isn't able to help the child, it's frustrating. For children who have become fluent readers, there is a choice of books at their instructional level.

Twila discovered that with a large number of second language children, it was important to meet the families and establish contact with them. Drawing from her Head Start teacher experiences with home visits, she has begun to make home visits with her students:

> I have found that the parents are so dedicated. Some parents work seven days a week, many have more than one job, and yet they are so appreciative when the teacher takes an interest in their child. In home visits I sit on one side, the parent on the other, and the child in the middle. I have the child do a read aloud. My observation is that often parents want to supply the word or say "no" if it's wrong. I try to model a different approach. I have a student from Sierra Leone who could self-correct but who read very rapidly and had to be encouraged to slow down

Photo 1. *Books Home* Check-Out Chart

to figure out an unfamiliar word. When we read in her home, the parents observed that by giving the child some wait time, validating her approximations, and giving her clues (i.e., Do you see a word inside the word that you know? Look at the picture. Does that make sense?) that she could figure out the word. The father was really quite amazed when he saw that his daughter could successfully get the word through a discovery approach.

Classroom II: First Grade

The *Books Home* system in Larry Pennington's first-grade class was built around books which were used for instruction in classroom reading groups. Consequently, children took home books which they already knew well and could read. In contrast to classrooms where students could choose any book from the collection, this system emphasized the benefits of rereading familiar books for mastery and the sense of readership that comes with it.

After four months, Larry had this to say about his Books Home component:

> At the beginning of the year, in particular, it gives the child an opportunity to feel like a reader. You have children who can read, but they don't *believe* they can read. They don't see themselves as read-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> ers. You need them to be able to bring home a simple book like *A Party*, which is as simple as you can get and say "I can read this. Listen, I will read it to you." My hope is that a little sooner they'll step through that doorway and realize they can read. The sooner they make that discovery, the sooner they'll start reading things in the environment that they already know how to read but don't try to read because they don't see themselves as readers.

The check-out system in this room consisted of the same "pocket chart" used in the other rooms. When selecting a book to take home, each child recorded the book's number on two semi-permanent cards. One card recorded only the date and the book number, while the other had an additional space for a parent's signature.

While the majority of the check-out system was teacher administered, "helpers" stamped the date in the left-hand column of each card and assisted the teacher in putting completed cards back on the pocket-chart. Children who did not return their books or signature cards could not take additional books home until they returned books and cards, or made special arrangements with the teacher (sometimes including the payment of a fine for lost books).

This class checked out books approximately three times per week, avoiding Fridays and holidays so as to limit the probability that a child would lose or forget a book when school started again. The class spent about 15 min selecting and checking out books. It should be noted that children were already familiar with the books available to check out (making the process of selecting a book more informed and thus less time-consuming for a child), and that the selection continued to grow throughout the year as more books were introduced through reading group instruction.

Classroom III: First Grade

Chris Sutton had 21 children in her first-grade class. Five were native speakers of English and 16 were English as a second language learners; however, only 5 students received ESOL/HILT (English for Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training) services. Chris viewed the *Books Home* program as a way for parents from varying linguistic backgrounds to be able to participate in their children's education.

Chris felt that taking books home and having the opportunity to practice reading them at home was critical for emergent readers. She also felt that the *Books Home* program built responsibility in the first grade:

> . . . the notion that they could take a book home and take care of it and be responsible for bringing it back. This is *very* important for young children.

Because she wanted the children to be able to read a book at home successfully, she divided the books into four levels which were color-coded by difficulty. The books were attractively displayed on a book rack. Most children were told to select from two levels, some could select from three and a few could select any book.

> When a child asks me if they can take a book from the next level—even if I'm not sure if they are able to read it—I usually say, "Oh yes, I think you're ready to try that."

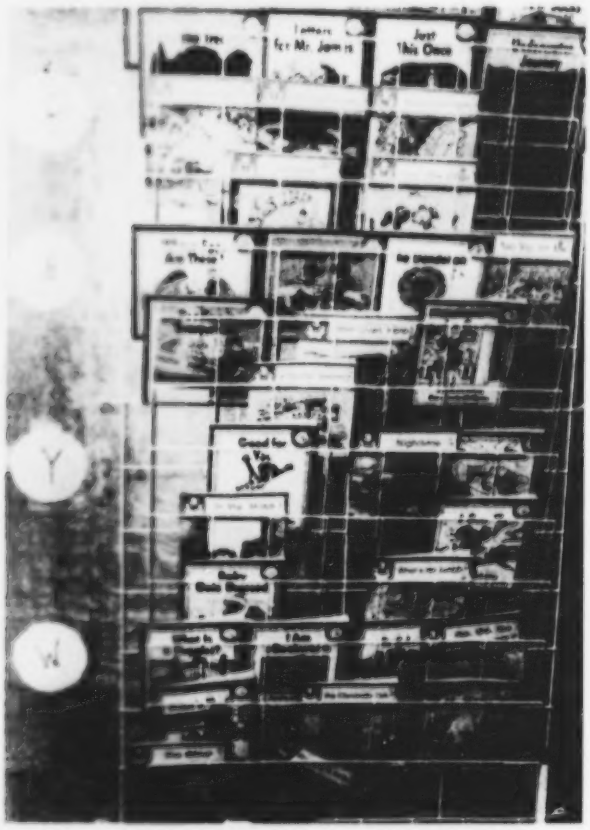

Photo No. 2
Books Home Classroom Display Rack

Chris wanted to increase the independence of her children in the check-out system and decided to have the children write the number and stamp the date themselves. Her future plans included finding out more about what happened when the book went home that strengthened the tie between school and home, and to invite more parent feedback and involvement in the program.

Classroom IV: First Grade

Julia Friedman utilized peer instruction in her *Books Home* program. One-half of Julia's students received pull-out ESOL/HILT instruction. She first introduced her *Books Home* program to her English proficient students (a number of the English proficient students were bilingual, with a range of English proficiency).

Photo No. 3
Personal Book Selection encouraged enthusiasm among the students

while ESOL/HILT students were receiving instruction outside of her classroom. She first modeled the check-out system and then asked the children to check out books. When the ESOL/HILT students returned, she paired an English proficient student with each "English as a Second Language" student, asking children from the first group to help their partners check out a book.

When the books came back to school, she also used peer instruction. The children "buddy read" the books they took home with their partners. They discussed with their partners why they selected the book and shared their opinions about the books they had taken home. Children did a lot of talking about books in her class. They liked to read and talk about why they liked books. They were proud of their

accomplishments in reading and enjoyed reading the books that their friends liked to read.

Finally, she used peer instruction to make the check-out system run smoothly. Each week, she assigned a first-grade librarian and aide to be in charge of helping the entire class check out books. The librarian and aide set the books out on a long table so that the children could see each cover and select books they wanted from the display. After children had selected books, the librarian and aide collected the books which were not checked out and put them away in a basket. First graders took responsibility for the entire check-out program.

Julia felt that the children were excited about the program because they could select books themselves that they could read on their own. She noticed that her students improved in their ability to select books of the appropriate level:

> Since we started the *Books Home*, when they go down to the library they are starting to pick up books that they can actually read. So they're picking out "I Can Read" books, they're picking out Rookie Readers—they're picking out books that they now know they will be able to read. And sometimes they will write about the book that they have read in their journal . . . or they will sometimes make a comment like "I didn't like this book because it was scary or the pictures weren't good." They also talk about their illustrations and things like that. And of course they all like dinosaurs, so if it has a dinosaur on the cover they will check it out. The benefits of reading books they are interested in shows up in writing about topics that concern them.

Julia saw connections between the books home program and all the other meaningful events and activities which developed literacy in her classroom (embedded spelling activities, reader's circles, buddy reading, guided reading, journal writing, book making). Each activity strengthened, reinforced, and built upon what the child had learned through other activities. She also commented that children who read books at home became better writers as well as better readers:

> I have a little girl who tries to pick all the books that have babies in them. Because she has a baby brother and she likes writing about her baby brother, she's picking up a lot of vocabulary from the books and she's also using it in her writing. Because the children read about what they are interested in learning about, they are motivated to read more, write more, and become better readers and writers.

Establishing a *Books Home* Program in Your Classroom: Considerations and Alternatives

A *Books Home* program can be a powerful tool in helping you to establish consistent communication with your students' families. Better communication will reveal new information about what children know and experience and ways in which you can better include members of your students' home communities in your classroom community. With these

goals in mind, listed below are some basic suggestions and issues you'll want to consider when developing a *Books Home* program for your classroom.

Let parents know that you consider them to be important to their child's developing literacy.

Teachers sent home bilingual (Spanish-English) letters to the parents inviting them to participate in the *Books Home* program and followed up through parent-teacher conferences. In one school, reading teachers and classroom teachers held a parent night assembly to share with parents the ways they taught reading at school. The idea was not that the school dictate the expectations of parents, but to send consistent, nonjudgmental messages to encourage children to read at home to family members.

The *Books Home* program was linked to other activities to strengthen home-school connections. In one school, the first-grade teachers collaborated on developing units (i.e., "My Family") with homework assignments which encouraged children to involve family members in fun and interesting ways. Teachers also encouraged parent volunteers to participate in their classrooms. Some parents read to students or listened to students read. Others came in and helped with class newsletters or student writing.

Providing translators and translating written communication is one way to demonstrate that the school values the participation of language minority parents. Inviting parents to come in to talk about their families and home cultures, to read to children in a variety of languages, and to display books, calendars and various cultural artifacts that children bring in from home are all ways to incorporate the diversity of experiences and abilities of parents.

Decide which books you will use.

Whether you choose to send home only books which you have introduced through instruction and/or that you feel that a child has mastered sufficiently to read entirely on his or her own will make a difference in how your *Books Home* library will fit into your overall classroom environment. What are your most central goals for sending books to be read at home? If you use books which you have not previously introduced through instruction, how will you integrate the *Books Home* books into your classroom instruction? If you will send books home twice a week, you will need at least twice as many titles as children in your class.

Text selections should include bilingual books and titles in the families' first language, as well as books produced by children. Other aspects of your program (such as asking parents and children to collaborate to create books at home, or asking parents to translate English books to create bilingual texts) can introduce new books for your children to select and share.

Develop a check-out system.

We used charts with library pockets assigned to each student, but a similar system could be accomplished in a myriad of ways.

Give some thought to the types of information you would like your system to capture in terms of tracking your students' progress and set the basic parameters of your classroom system accordingly. Our systems, for example, could track a student's "history" of book selection by both title and text difficulty level. Minimally, you should have a record of which books a student took home and who read with them in chronological (if not dated) order. We recommend that you keep students' borrowing histories both in the classroom and on the "take home" card or slip, so that you'll know when a book isn't returned and so that you can be sure you'll have a record of a student's progress if a slip gets lost. Your system should ideally be something that your students can eventually "take over" and manage themselves. Leave some room for future alterations.

You may want to consider the monetary value of books and other program materials when developing your check-out system. While fines may discourage involvement by some parents, consequences of lost or damaged books are real. Think about instituting some system of "disincentives" to prevent losing books to the inevitable perils of rainstorms, school buses, and younger siblings (among other things).

Set some time aside on a regular basis to check out and to talk about books that children have read at home.

The process of selecting books and checking them out in our project classrooms generally took about 15 minutes (longer at first). If your schedule is tight, think of other literacy activities you have instituted that follow a regularized schedule. How could you integrate *Books Home* into these already established routines? In our project classrooms, for example, children read books with a partner first thing every morning, followed by a wrap-up discussion led by the teacher. After *Books Home* began, rather than choosing a library book or another classroom book, children read the books they had taken home the night before. The whole-class discussion subsequently incorporated the *Books Home* books, and children often reported on the person with whom they had read their books at home. It is important that your students perceive taking books home as an integral part of your class activities, not just an "extra."

Take your time getting started.

It may take some time for you to know which selection of books will be appropriate for your class, as well as what types of classroom activities lend themselves best to working with *Books Home*. Our project teachers suggest beginning *Books Home* at the start of the second or third month of school and using the next two months or so to fine tune your classroom system before expanding your program. You may wish to begin by having children check out books once per week until you (and they) feel comfortable with the check-out system.

Coach children on reading with others at home.

Some parents will not be able to read the English language books you send home. You can begin with books in the home language.

Being read to and reading in the home language can be a valuable stepping stone, socially, cognitively and affectively, for learning English as a second language. Make sure your students understand that parents who do not read or speak English can still contribute to their English reading experiences. Suggest activities such as having the parent or child narrate the story in the home language by looking at the pictures. Remind students of strategies they can use when they "get stuck on a word," but emphasize that their reading time at home should be an enjoyable experience, and one to be shared. For that matter, be sure that you let students know that other household members besides parents can be involved; younger siblings can provide an audience and give an important boost to children's view of themselves as readers.

Integrate taking books home into your classroom as fully as you can.

Draw connections with other classroom activities that can help you create a more comprehensive literacy program for your students. As you and your class become more familiar with the process and purpose of taking books home, there will be many opportunities for you to expand your program to include more connections to home-based learning.

Conclusions

Beginning readers need as much practice reading real texts as they can get at home and at school. As children read and re-read books successfully, they develop more confidence and stronger identities as readers. Reading books to an audience of family members develops fluency and expression. By selecting books themselves, children take charge of their growing reading experiences. *Books Home* is only one component of a comprehensive program of literacy instruction for emergent readers. A balanced program includes shared reading, guided reading, "buddy" reading, instruction in reading strategies, and other activities such as journal writing, embedded word study, and the publishing of books by whole classes and individual students.

Children of language minority families are often bridging two worlds in their daily commute between their homes and schools. Through *Books Home*, our intent is to open dialogue with parents who, because of cultural or linguistic barriers, may not feel they currently have a voice in the classroom. The result of this dialogue ideally infuses classroom literacy instruction with information which connects school activity to children's home lives and different cultural experiences. The variety of ways in which parents and children can share *Books Home* reading time encourages participation by parents of varying levels of formal education, literacy ability, and linguistic competence in English.

Books Home invites parents and family members to become actively involved in their children's move toward literacy. Because *Books Home* asks the community from which the child comes to take an active role in the development of reading skills, household members are acknowledged as integral to the educational development of children. When using *Books Home* in the classroom, the teacher uses it as a component of a broad effort to involve the community in the educational

development of children. Success with the system is best ensured when the community is seen as indispensable to that development.

Author Note. We would like to thank the children and parents of the classrooms of Julia Friedman, Twila Frey, Larry Pennington and Chris Sutton, Etta Johnson and the ESOL/HILT Department, Dr. Lee Penders, Principal of Glencarlyn Elementary School, and Felicia Russo of Long Branch Elementary School.

We would like to acknowledge the support of the Wright Group and Rigby, and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the University of Maryland.

References

Arce-Hoyt, M. I., & Johnson, E. (1992). *A model for developing a family-school partnership in a culturally and linguistically diverse school district*. Arlington, VA: Arlington Public Schools, ESOL/HILT.

Bruner, J. (1986) *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Collier, V. P. (1994, March). *Promising practices in public schools*. Paper presented at the 1994 International TESOL Convention, Baltimore, MD.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1991). *Crossing cultural borders: Education for immigrant families in America*. New York: Falmer Press.

DeJesus, E. (1985). Literacy and the home. *Language Arts, 62*, 845-847.

Epstein, J. L. (1986, June). Parent-involvement: Implications for limited-English-proficient parents. In C. Simich-Dudgeon (Ed.), *Issues of parent involvement and literacy*. Proceedings of the symposium held at Trinity College, Washington DC.

Flores, B. (1991). Transforming deficit myths about learning language and culture. *Language Arts, 68*, 369-379.

Holland, K. E. (1991). Bringing home and school literacy together through the reading recovery program. In D. E. DeFord, C. A. Lyons, & G. S. Pinell (Eds.), *Bridges to literacy: Learning from reading recovery*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Luke, A. (1986). Linguistic stereotypes, the divergent speaker and the teaching of literacy. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 18*(4), 397-408.

Moll, L. C., & Greenberg, J. B. (1990). Creating zones of possibilities: Combining social contexts for instruction. In L. C. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 132-141.

O'Flahavan, J. F. & Wong, S. D. (1994). *Transforming early literacy instruction in the regular classroom: Toward a comprehensive instructional framework designed to meet the needs of all students* (Continuation Application, Award Number: R117A2007). Washington, DC: Office of Research, Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

Snow, C. E., Barnes, W. S., Chandler, J., Goodman, I. R., Hemphill, L. (1991). *Unfulfilled expectations: Home and school influences on literacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, D. (1983). *Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write*. Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

Trueba, H. T. & Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1988). *Minority achievement and parental support: Academic resocialization through mentoring* (Research-Technical Report No. 143). Santa

Barbara: University of California, Graduate School of Education. (EDRS No. 299 359)

Violand-Sanchez, E., Sutton, C. P., & Ware, H. W. (1991). *Fostering home-school cooperation: Involving language minority families as partners in education* (Program Information Guide Series No. 6). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

NRRC National Reading Research Center

318 Aderhold, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602-7125
3216 J. M. Patterson Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742